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173 story tellers or that the Creeks were able to record historical events in some relatively permanent manner. The first would at the outset appear the more probable explanation, but we know from several [211] sources that these tribes had mnemonic devices similar to quipus, and it is therefore possible that the movement took place along the line laid out. Certainly this earliest narrative localizes much more closely than any of the legends recorded later. Gatschet missed much of its value by thinking of the Kasihta and Coweta as two among 40 [101] or 50 coordinate bodies, while in fact Kasihta and Coweta represented, in early times, the entire Muskogee element among the Lower Creeks, and the Abihka and Coosa the bodies of Muskogee from which most of the Upper Creeks originated.[17] This legend therefore involves the origin of the greater part of the Muskogee people.

Adair speaks several times of Indian traditions of a western origin, but usually he has in mind the Chickasaw. However, he says in one place that the Muskogee "believe their original predecessors came from the west, and resided under ground," [18] and by "predecessors" here he evidently intends ancestors.

173 Another long version of the legend is contained in a work by Gen.
539 Milfort,[19] who claims to have lived among the Creeks from 1776 to 1796, and to have been made "tastanégy ou grand Chef de guerre de la nation Crëck."[20] We know that there was no such position as "grand war chief of the Creek nation," every town having had its own tástánágis and its head tástánági. Still, under McGillivray, with whom Milfort claims to have been associated, a kind of despotism existed under which a friend of the Creek leader might have been advanced to considerable power. Though Milfort's work is written in an intensely egotistical vein and contains numerous exaggerations and misstatements it is evidently founded on fact. The migration legend which it reproduces is probably correct in fundamentals, but Milfort has identified rivers and other geographical features in such a reckless manner that he carries the Creeks over a large part of the central United States and into places where the nation was scarcely known even by name. The legend is probably a form of the version current at Otciapofa, McGillivray's home town, and has especial interest for that reason. It is as follows:

"When the Spaniards conquered Mexico everyone knows that this fair country of North America was inhabited by a gentle and peaceable people which, having no knowledge of firearms, was easily subjugated. It had only courage and numbers to oppose to the murderous arms of its enemies; in a word, it was defenceless; for

[17] See Bull. 73, Bur. Amer. Ethn., pp. 215-234.
[18] Adair, Hist. Am. Inds., p. 268.
[19] Mémoire ou Coup-d'Oeil Rapide sur mes différens voyages et mon séjour dans la nation Crëck. Paris, 1802.
[20] On the title page of Milfort's work.

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several towns joined. There was not before or after this time the same unity of action, not even in the Creek-American War. The general correctness of Milfort's account is indicated by numerous points of agreement with the facts recorded by Adair and the other writers quoted above; in particular the prominent position he gives the war club as a war symbol tallies exactly with every scrap of information derived from other sources. The war medicines spoken of by Hawkins and in Chekilli's migration legend do not appear here; they were probably carried only by the head chief, or perhaps only by the chief of Kasihta.

Milfort claims to have been instrumental in doing away with the custom of burning captives at the stake,[28] but from what Bartram says[28a] it is evident that it had begun to decline several years before. Milfort also says that he induced the Indians to rate the taking of a prisoner at three scalps which should belong to the captor.[29]

His account follows:

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"When he [the head war chief] had made known the necessity of calling together the warriors, a club was immediately exposed in public, part of which was painted red; that signified that a part of the nation, that is the young men, must hold themselves in readiness to march; for if the club had been colored red all over the entire nation would have had to prepare itself, something which happens only under extraordinary circumstances. The manner of painting this club red also lets each particular chief know at the same time how many men he must bring with him to the appointed rendezvous, so that the head war chief is always certain of the number of soldiers he will have at his disposal, a number which he regulates according as circumstances demand, and which he is able to fix absolutely.

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"When it is thus necessary to assemble the warriors at a common rendezvous, the head war chief has a club partly colored red given to each subordinate chief; it is usually accompanied by a certain number of little sticks, which serve to inform the warriors who carry them into the different cantons of the nation, of the day when they must be at the general rendezvous, with the number of young men needed for the march. Each day at sunrise a stick is thrown away, and the day on which they throw away the last must be that of their arrival at the place of meeting; there have been few cases of delay in this general muster. In order to provide against every slip of the memory, the bearers of the red club are obliged to give to each chief every day the watchword, which is usually the name of the place and the day of the meeting. I am going to give here a more detailed account of this red club, to say how it is given and what is its use.

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[28] Milfort, Mém., p. 219. [28a] Bartram, Travels, p. 211. [29] Milfort, op. cit.

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802 their fingers in counting from one decimal to another.[8] One of my Creek informants in using his fingers to aid his memory began with the little finger of his left hand, which he doubled over, and followed with his other fingers in order. Then he passed to his right hand where he again began with the little finger and proceeded as before.

804 Measures of length were based on various parts of the body, as was originally the case with us, the fingers, hands, arms, etc., being used.

Distances between places far apart were measured by the time consumed in getting from one to the other—i. e., by the number of camps or "sleeps" or by the number of moons. Regarding their

805 sense of the passage of time generally Swan has the following very pertinent remarks:

"They count the number of days or years, either past or to come, by tens. Having no exact method of keeping or reckoning their time they seldom tell nearer than within one month of the time any remarkable occurrence took place in the preceding year; but circumstances, or any speeches that might have attended such occurrence, they remember accurately. There is not one in the whole nation knows how old he is." [9]

The natural measures of time marked off by the altered positions of the sun and moon—i. e., days, months, and years, and their subdivisions—have already been discussed. When they wished to keep in mind a certain number of these or to remember certain ones among them they employed several devices.

805 211 The commonest method of determining a fixed date in the future upon which some event was to take place was by wrapping up a number of short sticks into a little bundle and throwing one away each day. When but one remained the person who had the bundle knew that the appointed day had arrived. This was the method employed every year to enable all of the families of each town to assemble on the busk ground at the proper date. As many bundles were distributed as there were families and the head of each family threw away the sticks. It is to be noted that a stick was thrown away immediately on receipt of the bundle—i. e., the count began with the day on which the bundle was received; in fact the messenger who brought the bundle usually threw away the first stick himself. This is said by French writers to have been the method by which the date of the Natchez massacre was fixed, and the tribes confederate to the conspiracy were able to tell when to rise. Such sticks were called "the broken days," and according to Adair the same name was applied to certain square notched sticks which were used for a similar purpose. In the latter case the sticks were sent about with a definite

[8] Schoolcraft, Ind. Tribes, vol. I, p. 273. [9] Swan in Schoolcraft, Ind. Tribes, vol. V, p. 277.

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number of notches in them and each day the man in charge cut one notch out. At other times notches were made instead of being cut out, especially when the future date was indefinite.[10] I have seen this method employed on the north Pacific coast. Eakins saw still another method in use among the Creeks in recording the days of the week. This consisted of a series of holes made in a board into which a peg was inserted.[11]

A third and particularly important method is mentioned by Adair. It was the use of cords on which were a definite number of knots. The time was determined by untying one of these knots each day, or perhaps by tying it, similarly to the usage in the case of notches. They employed all these devices not merely to keep run of the days but of the months and years as well, and Adair says of the last: "They count certain very remarkable things, by knots of various colours and make, after the manner of the South-American Aborigines."[12] Of course Adair is referring to the famous quipu of Peru, and it is very interesting to find that our southern tribes had a similar mnemonic system, especially as he implies that this was used to some extent to mark important events in past history. Adair's statement also serves to confirm an analogous assertion by Milfort, except that, according to the latter, beads strung on threads took the place of knots. Still there is no good reason why both devices should not have been employed. The idea once established would have seized upon any convenient means of expression. Milfort's statement runs thus:

"Since my arrival among the Creeks the old chiefs had often spoken to me of their ancestors, and they had shown me the belts (banderoles), or species of chaplets, which contained their histories. These chaplets were their archives; they are of little seeds like those which are called Cayenne pearls; they are of different colors and strung in rows; and it is on their arrangement and their pattern that their meaning depends. As only the principal events are preserved on these belts and without any details, it sometimes happens that a single chaplet contains the history of twenty to twenty-five years. These pearls are placed in such a manner as to preserve the various periods exactly; and each year is easily distinguished by those who know the arrangement."[13]

It furthermore appears from the speech of Chekilli to Governor Oglethorpe painted on a bison skin[14] that pictorial mnemonics or "picture writing" was known.

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[10] Adair, Hist. Am. Inds., p. 75.
[11] Schoolcraft, Ind. Tribes, vol. I, p. 273.
[12] Adair, op. cit., p. 75.
[13] Milfort, Mémoire, pp. 47–48. Such devices were in use also among the tribes of the Carolinas and Virginia.
[14] See p. 32.